

Dr. Peterson

Welcome: NCAA Leadership Institute

10-10:30 a.m. Thursday, July 10, 2014, Letterwinners Lounge, Bobby Dodd Stadium

Welcome to Georgia Tech. We're happy to have attendees to the NCAA Leadership Institute spending the day on our campus. I commend you for having the drive and foresight to take part in the Leadership Institute, an experience that will sharpen your skills and provide direction as you decide what professional goals you will pursue.

We're also happy to have our Georgia Tech athletic director Mike Bobinski with us here today. Mike just recently finished his first year with us, but he's been in collegiate athletics administration for 30 years. He's got a proven record of success and a wide-ranging background in sports, finance, and development. Mike also has an unwavering commitment to student-athletes, which makes him the ideal person to lead our athletic program. We've got 17 NCAA Division I varsity sports and a rich athletic tradition.

When we find an A.D. who's an effective leader, we tend to hang on to him. Georgia Tech's first A.D. was John Heisman, who served from 1904 to 1919. A little trophy that you might have heard of is named for him. Between Coach Heisman and Mike, there have been only six Georgia Tech athletic directors. Mike is the eighth man in our storied history to fill that role, and we hope he stays with us a long time.

At Georgia Tech, we always want to win, but we regard winning as something broader than just numbers that you look at in the standings or at the end of a season. A winning environment is something we work hard to create in each of our 17 sports. We place an emphasis on character, teamwork, integrity, and sportsmanship. Dr. Homer Rice, one of our former athletic directors, devised the Total Person Program. It's a concept based on Dr. Rice's belief that excellence is a result of a balanced life that encompasses academic excellence, athletic achievement, and personal well being. Georgia Tech became involved in the development of the NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills

program due to the existence of the Total Person concept. Our program provides many opportunities for student-athletes to achieve their potential in all areas of their lives.

We think the Total Person concept is working. Our graduation success rate for student-athletes rose to 79 percent, an all-time high for us. Georgia Tech athletes had a record-high 985 on the Academic Progress Report (APR), which is calculated by assessing each scholarship student-athlete's retention and eligibility. Eight of our 17 teams scored a perfect 1,000, and the football team was in the top 10 percent in the nation, with its highest APR ever.

I've looked over the list of skills that you'll be sharpening during your week at the Leadership Institute. They're all impressive, useful, and necessary. Several of them are communication-based, and it's hard to overemphasize how important is the ability to communicate ideas clearly and convincingly. Other skills you'll study are related to your personal philosophy and personal integrity. If you don't have a firm grasp in those two areas, all the communication skills in the world won't make you an effective leader.

By attending the Leadership Institute, you're taking important first steps toward taking charge of your careers. I commend you for that. I would encourage you to constantly assess your own strengths and weaknesses. Find a mentor, and mentor others — it's one of the best ways to learn and sharpen your own leadership skills. And while we're on the subject of mentors, I'd like to tell you a little about one who made his mark in this very building.

The facility in which we've convened is among the most historic in all of America. Bobby Dodd Stadium at Historic Grant Field was originally built in 1913 by members of the Georgia Tech student body, and it's the oldest on-campus stadium in NCAA Division I-A. It's been the site of a lot of great games and thrilling performances from some of college football's finest players.

Coach Dodd, for whom this stadium is named, is a legend around here. He was our head football coach from 1945 through 1966. In Coach Dodd's day, it wasn't uncommon for one man to occupy the two most prominent jobs in the athletic hierarchy. From 1950 through 1976, he was also our athletic director, a job he continued to hold even after retiring as football coach following the 1966 season. He resigned as A.D. in 1976 but served for 12 more years, until his passing in 1988, as an alumni association consultant. At his passing, he had served Georgia Tech for 57 years in various leadership capacities.

Coach Dodd didn't become a legend just by winning football games, although that helped. You might've seen the statue of him outside. There's also a plaque outside adjacent to that statute. Its top two lines say simply: "DODD'S BOYS— DONORS FROM 1945-66." There a lot of players' names inscribed, almost too many to count, whom Coach Dodd signed, coached, and shepherded through Georgia Tech.

His influence didn't end here. During his final year as Georgia Tech athletic director, a prestigious national award was established to honor the qualities that Coach Dodd exemplified. The Bobby Dodd Coach of the Year Award is still given each year to an NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision football coach whose team excels on the field, in the classroom, and in the community.

Leaders aren't always beloved, but Coach Dodd was. He made a positive difference in so many lives of those who came here. That's what leaders do. Their influence doesn't end when a season, a fiscal year, or a career ends. Those who called themselves Dodd's Boys became men, and they became successful in many different fields. Ask any one of them, and they'll tell you that Coach Dodd and the example he set planted qualities, values, and habits inside them that sprouted and never died. That's what Coach Dodd did. That's what leaders do, and that's what you will do, too, whether you find yourself leading a team, a business, an office, or even your family.

Thank you again for spending your day with us. We hope you'll get caught up in the energy, tradition, and spirit of Georgia Tech as you sharpen your leadership skills. Our Institute is the product of strong leaders all over campus during our 129 years of existence. Please enjoy your time here, and come back to visit us again.